



FRIENDS OF CHILTERN MT- PILOT NATIONAL PARK Inc.

Newsletter No. 351: September - October 2025

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Please send all newsletter correspondence to Secretary, Liz Maartin

AGM 2025 – By Liz Maartin

This year saw some changes in the format of the afternoon/evening events. *Thanks to everyone for their time and effort in making the whole event so successful.*

The afternoon Nature Walk was led by members of our group (see Jenny's report below) rather than the guest speaker, as has been the tradition.

Dinner was a wonderful affair, the variety of food was excellent and all contributions were delicious and much appreciated.

Professor David Watson was a very engaging speaker and we are incredibly grateful that he was able to present to our group. His talk ... "The good earth: farmland is crucial for safeguarding wildlife in a warming world" was equally inspiring and sobering. For information on David and his research, his webpage is:

<https://ecosystemunraveller.com/>

David declined any payment for his time, but we hope that some good red wine and fancy dark chocolates (our gifts to him) provided enjoyable compensation!

Your new committee is:

Tanya Thompson	President
Tony Murnane	Vice President
Liz Maartin	Secretary and Treasurer
Committee members	Jenny Davidson, John Hawker, Richard Jerome.
Webmaster	Tony Marsh

Please feel free to provide feedback/comments about this year's AGM event to me:

secretary@friendsofchiltern.org.au

September and October Field Days

Nature Walk from Honeyeater Picnic Area, Saturday 6th September - Jenny Davidson

As is the usual practice on AGM day, the group visits somewhere of interest in the Park prior to meeting back in the Hall for the shared evening meal, AGM and guest speaker.

This time we headed for Honeyeater Picnic Area and walked uphill to complete a loop which included All Nations Road in the hope of seeing a range of flowers. However, the Park was quite dry so the offerings were limited.

Acacias in flower were abundant, mainly Varnish Wattle (*Acacia verniciflua*) and Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*). A few pea flowers were starting to show: Purple Coral-pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*) and Small-leaf Parrot Pea (*Dillwynia phyllicoides*).

The most satisfying finds were four species of Greenhoods: Nodding Greenhood (*Pterostylis nutans*), Dwarf Greenhood (*Pterostylis nana*), Blunt Greenhood (*Pterostylis curta*), and Maroonhood (*Pterostylis pedunculata*).

Just one week later after some good rain and a bit more warmth, Tanya retraced our walk and found and photographed many species in flower.



Leopard Orchid



Dwarf Greenhood



Small-leaf Parrot-pea

Field Day, Sunday 5th Oct 2025

It was a record turnout for our October Field Day with 26 participants enjoying activities. This large group divided and enjoyed 2 very different activities (summaries are below) before regrouping for a delicious morning tea at Honeyeater Picnic Area. Thank you everyone for a great morning!

Group #1 - Nest Box Monitoring

A small group of 6 (4 of us newbies to Friends) investigated 12 mammal nestboxes at Depot Rd and Donchi Rd. No animals were seen except for one unidentified ball of fur in one box (Tuan?) but a whole bird's wing was found in another box - an amazing thing for a Tuan to drag into the box.

On the way back we called past our very rare Grevillea - possibly the only *G. floribunda* in the wild in the State but now suspected of being a *Grevillea polybractea* (Crimson Grevillea), also very rare and listed as Endangered. **By Mick Webster**



Tuan's nest



Crimson Grevillea (suspected to be)

Group #2 - Nature Walk with Neil Blair

We had 19 participants on the Nature Walk with Neil Blair, and within 5 minutes of commencing the 2-hour session it became evident why Neil is such a respected and popular leader of Friends' activities! His calm nature, logical thinking and depth of knowledge is inspiring.

It was a beautiful day, unseasonably warm as we started the walk at Muffler Rd in the Chiltern section of the Park. First up Neil provided us with the definition of a forest – at midday in a forest there is 30% shadow on the ground amongst the trees. Less than 30% is defined as a woodland. Chiltern-Mt Pilot NP is a forest. Forests tend to be named after the tallest trees present, hence the Box-Iron Bark Forest of Chiltern-Mt Pilot.

The trees forming the upper storey of this forest are primarily Ironbark, Stringybark and Box. The smaller shrub layer contains mainly wattles (eg Golden and Varnish). The lower shrub layer heaths, and the ground cover herbs and orchids.

The Chiltern and Mt Pilot sections are very different. The Chiltern section is primarily sandstone, the Mt Pilot section granite. This difference affects the flora found in each section. Throughout the Park 650 (native and non-native) floral species have been identified including 30 wattles, 20 eucalypts, 50-60 orchids, and 50 peas. Although much diminished since European settlement, this biodiversity is still magnificent and we should keep enjoying it and of course fighting for it.

Neil talked about the concept of 2 'extra seasons'...Sprinter (Aug-Sept), and Sprummer (Oct-Nov) being in line with the Aboriginal 'calendar' which equates more closely with real life biological cycles. Some orchids demonstrate their preference for 'Sprinter' flowering, starting in August, and some later in November, 'Sprummer'.

Before walking more than 50m 'we' had spotted amongst many others: Sundew (Tall and Pale); Mat Rushes; Pink Fingers (including a double headed flower); Dusky Fingers; Bulbine Lilies; Leopard Orchids and Common Early Nancy. Twining Glycine; Common Beard-heath; Golden Moths and Wax lip soon followed!

Other things we saw and learnt....

- The Sun-orchid gets its name from the fact that most don't open unless it is sunny. These orchids straddle Sprinter-Sprummer.
- There is a hybrid form of the Golden Moths Orchid and Leopard Orchid!
- Sundews are carnivorous and get their nitrogen from insects not from the soil, so they are usually found in nitrogen deficient soils. There are 2 types: Tall which have a reddish tinge, and Pale which are smaller with a green tinge and hairy flowers.

For the second part of the Walk, we drove to Old Cemetery Rd which took us into the Pilot side of the Park. The difference in flora was immediately apparent with few Ironbark, and mainly Box (including Long Leaf Box), and Stringybark.

The clumps of Nodding Blue Lily were prolific. This Lily is generally found in the Pilot/Beechworth areas rather than in the Chiltern section.

We also found many Sun-orchids including the Rabbit-eared and Salmon varieties.

The Purplish Beard-orchid had many of us down on the ground trying to get a good photo. Sadly, I couldn't capture it, but the orchid appears in the 2025 Friends' Calendar in.... October ☺

If you are interested in finding out the botanical names of these plants, the Friends of Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park Wildflower Guide is a great resource/reference.

Neil, our deepest thanks for a wonderful experience and we hope to be able to do it again next year! (Apologies if I have any of the information wrong....)

By Liz Maartin



Off Old Cemetery Rd



Nodding Blue Lily



Golden Moths



Wax-lip Orchid



Neil ☺



Rabbit-eared Sun-Orchid

Ranger's Report – Scott Cunningham

The restructure of Parks Victoria continues with a planned finalisation of late November. Recruitment has been placed on hold until then. For the team at Beechworth this means that currently we have 2 rangers and a team leader.

Yeddonba art site reopened to the public at the end of September, the walkway has been rebuilt and we expect some preservation works to the rock art will occur soon.

With summer approaching our focus now returns to visitor management, rubbish removal and camper patrols, we are also continuing efforts to reduce the occurrence of off-road motorbike damage.

Extra work in the Park – By Liz Maartin

On a cool and drizzly morning early in the month, Tony, Mick, Helen and I set about fixing up the guards around the *Cryptandra amara* (Bitter *Cryptandra*).

I was interested to learn from the 'old hands' that this patch on Riley's Rd in the Chiltern section is the only one in the Park. We were able to see how well plants had fared since being provided with wire guards (over the last 6 years or so), and some had grown so well they outsized their protection.

It was pleasing to see how many self-propagated, healthy plants were growing in the area and we were able to move guards from dead plants and protect some of the new ones.

Thanks to Mick for his reconnaissance of the site, and preparation of the guards. And to Tony and Helen for their assistance.

If anyone is interested in helping with another re-guarding task (this one on a large scale), we will be adding extra protection to the guards around the *Banksias* on Settlers Rd. The *Banksias* planted in that area have a chequered history and the current 87 plants are under siege from Sambar Deer who are eating through the large mesh wire guards.

I will be sending an email out about details for this activity, which will be extra to the monthly Field Day.

Saving the Regent Honeyeater- By Liz Maartin

For those who couldn't attend the live Webinar "Saving the Regent Honeyeater" which was presented by Birdlife Australia on Thursday 25th September, I have provided a link to a recording of the Webinar:

https://go.birdlife.org.au/e/946822/watch-v-kYtb1zQ-m8k/m6ycjw/1333730228/h/cfn9CwBrnUB32tKjMODZf--MpvV6z_LoXbCD7Y5mBOq

It was an excellent presentation, again equally inspiring and sobering, and some of the information provided by Birdlife is in the links below:

*the number one way to help Regent Honeyeaters is to find them and report your sightings via this link
https://go.birdlife.org.au/e/946822/N125-webinar-utm-content-Text1/m6ycjz/1333730228/h/cfn9CwBrnUB32tKjMODZf--MpvV6z_LoXbCD7Y5mBOq

*if you are a Birddata user, please use the new *Regent Honeyeater module* when searching for the bird.

*mistletoe propagation information

https://go.birdlife.org.au/e/946822/d-0041078953cc503c2056b-page-1/m6yck6/1333730228/h/cfn9CwBrnUB32tKjMODZf--MpvV6z_LoXbCD7Y5mBOq

RAINFALL

August 28mm (mean = 73). September 44mm (m=64).

Year total to 30/9 392mm (m=528). Last year to 30/9 was 369mm.

Only 3 months out of the last 19 have been above the mean rainfall.

The average annual rainfall for Chiltern is 689 mm.

Data supplied *by Mick Webster*.

NEXT FIELD DAY

Saturday 1st November 2025: Meet 9am at the Chiltern Post Office. We will be removing olives from the Rutherglen Nature Reserve and monitoring the nest boxes there.

Liz will send out an email with all details early next week. *This activity is also listed on Ecoportal.*

End of Year Gathering

Sunday 7th December 2025: Come and join our late afternoon/early evening event which we hold each December instead of the normal field day. It's a casual event and everyone brings a plate to share.

Venue and time are weather dependent and details will be advised closer to the date. 😊

FIELD DAYS - dates for 2026

Sunday 1st February, Saturday 7th March, Sunday 5th April (Easter), Saturday 2nd May, Sunday 7th June, Saturday 4th July, Sunday 2nd August, Saturday 5th September, Sunday 4th October, Saturday 7th November and Sunday 6th December 2026.

Rule of Thumb: For even months, the field day is held on the first Sunday of the month and for odd months, it is held on the first Saturday of the month.

****Memberships Subscriptions of \$20 for 2025-26 were due 30th June 2025****

Liz will be sending out reminders to those who haven't renewed their membership

****Information about the 2026 Calendar will be sent out ASAP****